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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 004273

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD, NEA/PPA, NEA/AGS, INR/IZ, INR/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DAILY IRAQI WEBSITE MONITORING - October 17, 2005

SUMMARY: Discussions of the constitutional referendum, problems with the IECI, and electoral bribery were the major editorial themes of Iraqi, Arabic language websites on October 17, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

- 1A. "What Happened Has Happened . We Should Look Forward" (Editorial by Fatih Abdul Salam - Iraq 4 All News - <http://iraq4all.org/viewnews.php?id=10349>)

"Mistakes, and even sins, were committed during the constitutional referendum, starting with forging the number of registered voters in certain locations and ending with voters not being able to reach polling stations in some locations. There were delays in opening [polling] stations; militias who stole ballot boxes in rural areas; and failures to inform citizens of the constitution's contents because draft copies were delivered only days before the referendum-and this is on top of the high percentage of illiteracy among Iraqis. This forced many people to cling to bits and pieces of the draft that do not reveal the true meaning of the script and how it affects the country's future.

"We expected to benefit from the experience we gained after the flaws of the previous election; but we did not, which indicates the possibility that this experience will not be used in the future when elections are held in December. Political processes require the government to remain open-minded regarding all Iraqi regions and rural areas. The government must be fully aware of details, and listen and immediately reply to complaints. It is not possible to rely entirely on the mechanisms of electoral commissions.

"The new test is coming, so have we prepared for it? Will we resume from where we left off, or will we start from scratch?"

- 1B. "Iraqi Referendum . Facts and Guidance" (From Al-Ittihad, published on Sawt Al-Iraq - "The Voice of Iraq" <http://www.sotaliraq.com/articles-iraq/nieuws.php?id=17539>)

"The first simple lesson in democracy that should be understood by all those concerned with the Iraqi situation is to respect the opinion of the majority regardless of how much they disagree with it. This fact, as simple as it may be, will determine the features of Iraq's future after final results of the referendum are announced. Those who boycotted the process, those who voted 'no,' and those who supported the draft constitution are required to respect the result and make use of it as they build toward the next set of significant political events, including parliamentary elections, formation of the government, and preparing for a new permanent political stage.

"Even though the referendum results are not yet known, what happened on that day offers many points that should be reflected upon thoroughly. First, the day of the referendum was the calmest in Iraq for months; those betting on rivers of blood flowing through streets and terrorists demonstrating scenes of violence that fail to distinguish between women, children, elderly people, and those trying to make a living for their families, were disappointed. This indicates a very important fact: all Iraqis have had enough of deteriorating conditions; they decided to cling to the hope embedded within the constitution, even if points of difference remain. It also indicates that terrorists failed to fulfill their self-endorsed image that they are larger

than [forces trying to] contain them, and that security and public awareness can put an end to their destructive action.

"Information is leaking from certain regions indicating that the constitution will be approved and that two-thirds of Iraqis eligible to vote turned out on polling day; regardless, those who opposed the constitution during the drafting process and those who supported the draft with or without reservations should all prepare themselves to absorb the first lesson of democracy: to respect the result and, most of all, to prepare to participate in the political process. After the final results are announced, there will be no place for those trying to turn back the clock."

C. "IECI Objects to Americans' Behavior, But."
(Editorial by Serdar Kawani - Independent Iraqi News Agency
- <http://www.normal.iraq-ina.com/showarticles.php?id=1487>)

"I read a piece of news titled: 'IECI objects to Americans' behavior.' I was surprised at this news because I noticed the Commission itself violates election laws. The Commission has authority over Americans and demands [they] 'hand over video and photography equipment to the Commission.' A commander of U.S. forces sent a formal apology.

"But when the Irbil Education Directorate refused to hand over a set of school's keys to the Commission, the Commission could not force the Directorate to abide by the law. Instead, the Commission carried out the Irbil Education Directorate's demands. They violated election laws, including Article 15, Item B. The judges and lawyers [associated with the Electoral Commission] were replaced with the schools' headmasters even though the judges and lawyers participated in courses to work as [referendum] coordinators. As a result of these violations, the referendum process and the Irbil bureau of the Election Commission were vulnerable to many problems in managing polling centers.

"When I told the head of the Irbil Bureau: 'Go ahead sir, solve all these problems,' he answered: 'What can I do?' I told him that this decision will cause many problems. Isn't it surprising that the commission has power over U.S forces, and yet it cannot decide to execute election laws and implement its decisions? Or is there something behind the scenes? The elections and referendum processes were fulfilled so Iraq can achieve a state of law and institutions.

"How is that the Supreme Independence Commission?"

D. "Nagham Al-Timimi, Oman Channel Correspondent! Who Is Responsible for Suing Her?"
(Editorial by Widad Fakher - Watan Lil Jamee - "Homeland for All" -
<http://www.wattan4all.com/viewarticle.php?id=5910&pg=articles>)

"Arabic prostitution channels have crossed their boundaries, especially since the fall of the idol of Auja [Auja refers to the birthplace of Saddam Hussein] on 9 September (sic) [April] 2003. There is no ministerial or legal authority to hold them [the channels] accountable. One of the Arabic prostitution channels is Al-Jazeera; its real owner, Donald Rumsfeld, American Secretary of Defense, drew a red line that the Iraqi government cannot cross. Al-Jazeera takes cover behind the largest American bases in the world: Al-Adiad and Al-Siliya in Qatar, both 'guarded' by the Americans. The second [channel] is Al-Arabiya, headed by a Saudi journalist and the former editor-in-chief of the Saudi Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, Abdul Rahman Al-Rashid.

"Today, on 15 October 2005, a correspondent of a television channel asked some Iraqi citizens to stand in front of her camera after they received \$5 to shout 'no' to the constitution during the Iraqis' referendum and festive carnival. The electronic Elaph newspaper published this piece of news the same day and disclosed the journalist and her criminal act. Nagham Al-Timimi claimed she practiced her democratic right by instigating people to say 'no' to the constitution in exchange for a bribe. The news segment was: 'commission member Hamdiya Al-Husseini said the level of participation was average all in all. she clarifies that a journalist who is working for an Arab channel gave \$5 for every person who said 'no,' the monitors were informed.' But she did not mention the journalist's identity or the channels she works for. However, media sources said Oman Sultanate satellite channel correspondent, Nagham Al-Timimi, was seen in front of an electoral center in Baghdad asking a woman who voted 'yes' to the constitution to stand in front of her camera and shout 'no' in exchange for \$5. Then one of the [election] monitors saw her, so he stopped her and asked why she did this. She replied that she was practicing her 'democratic' right. The monitor demanded that she remain where she was as he went to get guards to explain the issue; when he returned with police, they found that she had escaped with her crew.

"This correspondent's action can be described as criminal, starting from the bribe, forgery, and betrayal of press duty-which requires legitimacy in conveying news and absolute fairness. We ask the IECI, MOI, security forces, and national security advisors to tell us what they are going to do about that correspondent, especially since a referendum monitor was a witness and was supposed to spit on her face in front of her camera instead of filing a complaint.

"Millions of Iraqis and I are waiting to see what the Iraqi authorities will do, especially because the correspondent is Iraqi-what a shame! She claims she is from Timimi tribe?"

KHALILZAD